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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 001570

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TAGS: PGOV PTER PINS I2

SUBJECT: KURDISTAN INTERIOR MINISTER ON MAY 9 TRUCK BOMBING

REF: BAGHDAD 1555

Classified by James Yellin, Regional Coordinator, for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

This is an Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Reconstruction Team
Telegram.

¶1. SUMMARY: (C) Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Minister of the Interior Sinjari told us that the May 9 truck bombing of the Ministry of Interior building in Erbil had killed 14 and wounded 123, and was carried out by Al-Kataib Kurdistan, an element of Al-Qaida. He said the organizers of the attack are based outside of Kurdistan, in Kirkuk and Mosul. He warned that more attacks can be expected. END SUMMARY.

THE MAY 9 TRUCK BOMBING

¶2. (C) Regional Coordinator Yellin, accompanied by RRT Officer Gandle and USAID Representative Patterson, met on May 10 with Karim Sinjari, Minister of the Interior of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). Sinjari made the following points about the May 9 truck bombing at the Ministry of Interior (MOI) in Erbil:

-- The attack occurred at about 8:00 AM on May 9, when a truck carrying at least 800 kilos of TNT attempted to crash through the front gate barrier of the MOI. The MOI is adjacent to the Assayesh (Security Forces) Directorate.

-- The perpetrating organization was al-Kataib Kurdistan, an element of Dawlet al-Iraq al-Islamiya, another name for Al-Qaida. Dawlet al-Iraq al-Islamiya took public credit for the attack in an internet statement.

-- The organizers of the attack are based in Kirkuk and Mosul, outside of the Kurdistan Region, which makes it harder to capture them.

-- The truck was traced to an owner in Mosul. The driver has not yet been identified.

-- The MOI had been aware &for a long time8 that such an attack was being planned.

CASUALTIES AND DAMAGE

¶3. (C) According to Sinjari, the casualty toll from the attack is 14 dead, 123 injured. He added that:

-- Five of the wounded are in critical condition and have been evacuated to Iran for treatment. About 90 percent of the remaining injured have been treated and released from hospital.

-- Most casualties were passersby and people in neighboring buildings. Most workers at the MOI and Assayesh buildings

had not yet arrived for work; otherwise, casualties would have been much higher.

-- The MOI and Assayesh buildings have been rendered unusable and will need extensive repair of windows and other soft components. The buildings did not sustain structural damage, however.

PAST ATTACKS

¶4. (C) The Minister also provided background on the past attacks, stating that:

-- Over three years ago, there were two other incidents involving vehicle bombs and the MOI. In September 2003, an attack was foiled after the driver was shot by guards before he could explode his vehicle. In December 2003, a car bomb exploded in the road outside the MOI.

--The last vehicle bombing occurred on June 20, 2005, when a suicide attack at traffic police training center in Erbil killed at least 20 police recruits.

-- In addition, over the past two years, the KRG has stopped three car bomb attempts before they could be carried out. The KRG &said nothing about these because we didn't want the people to be afraid.⁸

NEW SECURITY MEASURES

¶5. (C) Sinjari said that in the wake of the May 9 bombing, the MOI is tightening its procedures at checkpoints,

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especially for vehicles from Mosul and Kirkuk. He warned, however, that checking all vehicles is difficult, since every day 9000 vehicles from Mosul and 8000 from Kirkuk enter Kurdistan.

¶6. (C) Finally, Sinjari warned that more attacks can be expected. &If a man wants to kill himself, you cannot stop him,⁸ Sinjari said.

STATEMENT TO PRESS

¶7. (C) After the meeting with Sinjari, Regional Coordinator made a statement for local TV. He condemned the attack, extended condolences to the families of the people killed, expressed our hope for a speedy recovery of the wounded, and said that we stand beside the Iraqi people in their fight against terrorism.

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